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10 reasons you can't be a Christian and vote for Donald Trump

*Christopher Pieper and Matt Henderson*

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As sociologists of religion, we are intrigued by the surprisingly large number of self-identified Christians, especially evangelicals, who support Trump and have voted for him over the more vocally religious Ted Cruz. In past elections, such voters were motivated by moral convictions around abortion, same sex-marriage, and the perceived deterioration of traditional values, and voted predictably for candidates such as Huckabee, Santorum, and most consequentially, George W. Bush.

These issues and their 2016 equivalents have never been central features of Trump's life history, let alone his candidacy, and on many of them he has confused, moderate or unclear positions. Whatever the appeal of Trump to evangelicals might be, it is not due to

these conventional stances.

It would take a good bit more research and analysis than the current space permits to adequately understand this head-scratcher. And, to be frank, it is not our central concern to do so. The clear and present danger of a Trump presidency impels us to skip over the thoroughness we would normally dedicate to investigation. And more precisely, our consciences demand that we address voters not primarily as scientists but as citizens and as people of faith. Our audience is that perplexingly large group of Texans who likewise identify as followers of Jesus Christ and plan to vote for Donald Trump.

For a while, his opponents have seemed willing to ignore Trump, perhaps as a disciplined tact to suffocate his bloviations of the oxygen they need to burn. We have come to feel, however, that this approach has ultimately proven naïve in the wake of his recent primary victories. However unserious anyone might find him, the nation is despairingly at a moment where we must take his challenge seriously.

So, at the risk of spilling more useless ink, on this eve of the Texas primary we offer an appeal to our fellow Christians — or anyone concerned with the potential moral consequences of a Trump presidency — to prayerfully consider how supporting him

squares with Christian commitment.

[How can Christians show loving kindness to refugees and do justice for Americans?](#)

Our argument is simple: A Christian who supports Trump either does not understand this person and his positions, or supports him in spite of Christian convictions.

In the same way that a person cannot love the Yankees and the Red Sox, follow veganism and devour a supper of Texas barbecue, or adore Joanna Gaines but hate shiplap, one cannot really love Jesus and wish to follow him and also vote for a person who so clearly embodies the opposite of everything Christ taught, died for and demands of us.

Here are 10 reasons, centered around ideas central to the Christian: character, relationships and values:

1. He lacks compassion.

The Bible says: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” ([Colossians 3:12](#))

On this point, we could cite Mr. Trump’s many instances of inflammatory rhetoric against immigrants and Muslims, his record of discriminatory housing practices, his public cruelty to ex-spouses or his sensational and mean-spirited feuds with other celebrities as evidence of his lack of compassion. But consider a recent [AP-GfK poll](#) showing that among Republicans, he is largely believed to lack compassion. And bear in mind, these are the people most likely to view him favorably. Many of those voters polled expressed this was not a concern. But for Christians, an unrepentant lack of compassion suggests that the man does not seek to please God or lead according to His will.



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump attends a worship service at the International Church of Las Vegas October 30, 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada. With nine days to go before Election Day, Trump is hoping to inspire the GOP base, including evangelical Christians, to support him. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

2. He appeals to fear and anger.

The Bible says: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” (1 John 4:18)

The Bible says: “But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5: 22)

[I bought the website Trump.org and Donald Trump came after me](#)

The recent attacks in San Bernadino and Paris are undeniably troubling. Meanwhile, more Americans are finding the changing economy an increasingly hostile and unforgiving

place. Americans' fears are existential and not without warrant. But Christians are called to love without fear. Mr. Trump has chosen to make immigration and the economy central themes of his campaign and his rhetoric surrounding these issues consistently appeals to fear and anger, absent appeals to love. Most notoriously, he chose to characterize Hispanic immigrants as rapists. Regardless of our policy convictions around the place of undocumented immigrants, this broad characterization is cynically aimed to incite fear and anger. His recent endorsement by the white supremacist American Freedom Party is the fruit of this rhetoric. It is also a callous and hostile way to characterize people, some of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ, all of whom are God's children.

3. He is enamored with “greatness” and ego, but has no concern for “goodness” or service.

The Bible says: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matthew 5: 5-8)

In *The Narcissist Next Door*, author Jeffrey Kluger suggests Trump is a classic narcissist. Some might say that running for office encourages this sort of thing. But narcissism might be the most dangerous condition for a Christian — without humility and self-effacement, we are incapable of modeling Jesus' behavior, we allow no space for the Holy Spirit to bless our relationships, and we are unable to receive or revel in the goodness of God. Ask yourself the last time you saw a public expression of humility from Mr. Trump.



Minister E.J. Christian, 68, wears a Donald J. Trump themed shirt with a cross necklace before the Republican Presidential nominee holds an event at the Eisenhower Hotel and Conference Center October 22, 2016 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Trump delivered a policy speech announcing his plans for his first 100 days in office. (Mark Makela/Getty Images)

4. He lies — a lot.

The Bible says: “Beware then of useless grumbling, and keep your tongue from slander; because no secret word is without result, and a lying mouth destroys the soul.” ([Wisdom 1:11](#))

According to Pulitzer Prize winning truth-checkers Politifact, which compares candidate statements to evidence, Trump’s statements are verifiably false 76 percent of the time. Among these is this infamous lie about 9/11: “I watched in Jersey City, N.J., where thousands and thousands of people were cheering as [the World Trade Center] was coming down. Thousands of people were cheering.” Not only is this pattern of dishonesty troubling for religious believers, it should disturb any citizen contemplating a vote for the most powerful office on the planet. Lying was enough to get two presidents impeached. Christian or not, telling the truth less than one-quarter of the time while a candidate is the

reddest of flags.

5. He is hostile to women.

The Bible says: “But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth.” ([Colossians 3:8](#))

Trump’s feud with Fox News host Megyn Kelly is now the stuff of legend, but what prompted the tension initially were his documented remarks about women, which Kelly reiterated during the Aug. 6 GOP debate: “You’ve called women you don’t like ‘fat pigs,’ ‘dogs,’ ‘slobs,’ and ‘disgusting animals.’” Trump has said the remarks were taken out of context.

[This election nears an end, but Americans’ divide never really closes](#)

6. He speaks about his daughter in a disrespectful and sexualized way.

The Bible says: “Do you have daughters? Be concerned for their chastity, and do not show yourself too indulgent with them.” (Sirach 7:24)

In a 2006 interview with Rolling Stone, when asked about the idea of his daughter posing for Playboy, Trump replied, “I’ve said if Ivanka weren’t my daughter, perhaps I’d be dating her.” For a self-identified Presbyterian, such a statement is hard to square with Calvinist sexual ethics.

7. He does not attempt to love his enemies, but instead cultivates antagonism.

The Bible says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” ([Matthew 5:43-48](#))

Trump’s “plans” for dealing with adversaries involve heavy and immediate use of force. Regarding ISIS, he told Fox & Friends on Dec. 2, “I would knock the hell out of ISIS... [and]

when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families.” Most military and diplomatic experts quickly retorted that such tactics used a decade ago were precisely what created ISIS. Apart from the strategic factors, such an approach to handling enemies, one that vindictively aims to punish the potentially innocent, is 100 percent counter to one of the core tenets of Jesus’ teaching.



Pastors from the Las Vegas area pray with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a visit to the International Church of Las Vegas, and International Christian Academy, Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2016, in Las Vegas. (Evan Vucci/AP)

8. He does not model sacrifice or altruism.

The Bible says: “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.” ([Matthew 19:30](#))

Perhaps Mr. Trump’s most credible qualification for the presidency is his prodigious business success, about which he never fails to remind us. However, Christians must consider how he made his fortune. Rather than invest in companies who provide goods and services which contribute to the prosperity of the Americans he seeks to lead, he has

invested heavily in casino gambling. He gave his name to a [sham university](#), defrauding students in the process. He has lobbied for and exploited imminent domain laws to muscle people off their property, most notably a New Jersey widow. Much has been made of his companies' multiple bankruptcies; more damning, though, is the fact that when his mortgage company failed, he denied responsibility, saying that he only let the company use his name. His business dealings do not suggest a willingness to place the fortunes of others ahead of his own, nor the integrity to accept responsibility.

9. He doesn't seem to care about the poor.

The Bible says: "Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'" ([Matthew 19:21](#))

Trump's policy ideas across the board are shockingly thin, typical of demagogues. On the issues of poverty, hunger, and oppression, topics everyone from Jesus to Jeremiah cared a great deal about, Trump is deafeningly silent. This alone is unacceptable. To be fair, though, here is one of Trump's few but fairly specific plans for helping the disadvantaged: "Teenage mothers [shouldn't] get public assistance unless they jump through some pretty small hoops. Making them live in group homes makes sense." His best 21st-century idea is the worst of 18th-century ideas.

[On Election Day we will all lose](#)

10. His love of money is more apparent than his love of God or others.

The Bible says: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6:24)

"My whole life I've been greedy, greedy, greedy," Trump said at recent rally. "I've grabbed all the money I could get. I'm so greedy." The spiritual concern here is not so much greed, but the misplaced priorities that his statement reveals. He has made the pursuit of material wealth an idol and worshipped it his entire life. Trump has forgotten the source of all wealth, the Creator of all abundance, and instead deifies the gifts of God rather than God

himself. No moral offense receives so many warnings in both the Old and New Testament as idolatry. Trump’s confession of this addiction is a good first step, but he hardly seems repentant. On many campaign issues, he appears to have recently found religion — but apparently not this one.

It’s a free country, thank God. You can vote for whoever you want. But for the Christian, this freedom is always constrained. Followers of Christ have taken up a yoke. And though it is light, it is not easy or common. This yoke ties all Christians, in all their perplexing diversity, to love, mercy, sacrifice, and justice. Voting, often thought of as a mere civic duty, is in this light, also a sacred act. It is the most powerful public expression of private values that most of us will ever harness. Let us cast all of our votes for love.

Christopher Pieper, Ph.D., is lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Baylor University and the author of “Sociology as a Spiritual Practice: How Studying People Can Make You a Better Person.” Matt Henderson is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at Baylor University, where he specializes in religion, family, and health.

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